

Richmond Celebrates Trekking on Tuesdays

Although most of the students attending our school live within walking or biking distance from school, many students receive rides from family members or other caregivers. A survey given in the fall of 2007 indicated that 63% of our students received rides to school on a regular basis. Students who regularly receive rides to school are deprived of the opportunity to add more physical activity to each day. Additionally, more students receiving rides to school means more vehicles adding to the traffic congestion around the school before and after school.

Our Education for Healthy Living School Improvement Team, which is comprised of staff and parent representatives, developed Tuesday Trekkers, a new program implemented in September, 2008 to promote walking or biking to school on each Tuesday of the month. On Tuesday mornings, various staff members meet students in Kindergarten through sixth grade on the playground or at the entrance doors to punch the Tuesday Trekkers cards of the students who have walked or biked to school that day. Students who are open-enrolled and live a greater distance from school are encouraged to be dropped off at least two blocks from school to allow them a distance to walk or bike. When the students complete a Tuesday Trekker card, it is dropped off in a special box in the office and the student receives an incentive prize. At the end of each quarter of the school year, several cards are drawn from the box for special grand prizes. Additionally, each classroom submits a tally of the number of Tuesday Trekkers in the class. The classes with the greatest percentage of Tuesday Trekkers receives a Golden Sneaker Award to display in their classrooms. The City of Appleton and the State of Wisconsin through a Safe Routes to School grant, a local biking organization, and several local businesses donated the items that are being used for the incentives and the special grand prizes.

The Governor's School Health Award provides a framework and guidance for the programming developed at Richmond Elementary School in support of providing an environment for our students that promotes healthy lifestyle choices. Through our involvement in the award application process, our leadership team identifies areas in which we can provide more opportunities for our students and their families. The Tuesday Trekker program was created to promote student commitment to physical activity, promote community involvement through the development of partnerships, and promote a safer environment for our students by reducing traffic congestion around the school campus.

We are very pleased to report that we have seen an increase in the number of students trekking to school on Tuesdays. For five consecutive weeks, at least two of our 12 classes have had "tied" for the Golden Sneaker Award with 60-67% of the students in their classes walking or biking to school on Tuesdays. The remaining classes reported percentages of 35% or more who were trekking on a particular Tuesday. The number of regular Tuesday Trekkers, the amount of parent involvement, and the enthusiasm

demonstrated by the participants contributes to the success of this new program in promoting more walking or biking at least one day per week.

In an effort to encourage more students to walk or bike to school each day, the Education for Healthy Living School Improvement Team at Richmond Elementary School implemented the Tuesday Trekker program to encourage more students to get into the habit of walking or biking to school on a more regular basis. A survey given in the fall of 2007 indicated that 63% of our students were receiving rides to and from school. The goal of the Tuesday Trekker program is to promote increased walking and biking at least one day of the week. Through the data collected each Tuesday morning since implementation of the program in mid-September 2008, we know that 35%-67% of our students in Kindergarten through sixth grade classrooms are walking or biking at least one day per week. This is an improvement over the 37% who were walking or biking on other days of the week.

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